

American Opinion Summary

Department of State

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1. BEN BELLA'S ALGERIA

Algerian Premier Ben Bella's conduct draws sharp criticism. "It is no novelty for the United States to offer a helping hand and get fiction for its trouble," the Chicago News comments, adding: "The sequence seldom occurs, however, with the speed employed by the brand-new nation of Algeria." The Philadelphia Bulletin, citing Ben Bella's embrace of Derticos and his planned trip to Cuba, said: "His diplomatic slap in this country's face is an indication of where he really stands."

Some advocate refraining U.S. aid to Ben Bella. Since he thinks "Castro and his revolution are so wonderful...let him turn to Castro for his foreign aid from this hemisphere," Scripps-Howard's Washington News suggests. The Philadelphia Inquirer says "there should be a good deal of pondering at Washington before this friend of our enemies is handed any money."

A few editors are more favorably disposed toward Ben Bella's Algeria. The New York Herald Tribune is critical of Ben Bella, but does not oppose aid to his regime. It suggests that he might ask himself "whether there are not values offered by the Western world which can never be matched by the Communists--values which are conducive to the independence and self-government for which the Algerians fought." Even more sympathetic, the Washington Post asserts: "There is every reason for the United States to assist a forward-looking and truly neutralist Algeria." The Post concludes: "Mr. Ben Bella's visit has served a useful purpose, and it may, hopefully, lead to the kind of mutual respect and friendship that Mr. Kennedy called for in 1957."

2. CUBA

A Gallup Poll report of popular opposition to U.S. military action against Cuba is underscored by several supporters of Administration policy. The Gallup survey discloses that 63% of the American public is opposed to U.S. military action against Castro at this time (with 24% in favor).

"This would indicate that, contrary to the loud breathing and fist-pounding of the vocal minority, the President has majority support for his careful watch-and-wait policy in Cuba," the Louisville Courier-Journal applauds. To the New York Post, the poll serves to establish that "the country is not complacent about Moscow's entrenchment in Cuba, but there is no evidence it considers war the way to expunge it."

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- 2 -

CUBA

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The Post's James Wechsler welcomes this "impressive evidence" that "the malady of Castroitis which seemed to be afflicting so large a section of the U.S. may abruptly pass." Now that "careful polls confirm that the great majority of Americans are giving the President the necessary benefit of the doubt," declares Eric Sevareid, "this is an opportune time for trying to foresee the immediate future" in handling the Cuban issue.

Commentators differ sharply about the activities of the Cuban exiles. However "admirable," says the New York Times, Alpha 66's attacks on all shipping, regardless of nationality, carrying supplies to Cuba are "dangerously playing with the laws and the security of the U.S." The Times recommends that Washington "curb these illegal and dangerous actions." The Louisville Courier-Journal notes that "our allies are asking sharp questions about their activities," and concludes it is "absurd and dishonest of us" both to "say we can't control them" and to permit them "to do something we will not, and should not, do ourselves."

But some others propose "throwing American support behind a program" of aiding the raiders and encouraging an anti-Castro revolt in Cuba (e.g., Daniel James, William Shannon in N. Y. Post). Marguerite Higgins suggests that the anti-Castro rebels "may discover that the only way to gain Washington's full support for guerrilla warfare in the Caribbean is to continue to show that it can be done" (in N.Y. Herald Trib.). Editorially, the Herald Tribune endorses the U.S. rejection of a British request for protection against Cuban exile raiders, declaring: If these vessels want to sail to Cuba, "they will have to do so at their own risk."

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